Inform Asia: USAID's Health Research Program

Leader with Associates Annual Report: Year 2

October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016

Table of Contents

List of Exhibits

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
COP	Chief of Party
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
IR	intermediate result
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PDR	(Lao) People's Democratic Republic
Q	quarter
TRCARC	Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

1. Program Overview/Summary

Program Name:	Inform Asia: USAID's Health Research Program
Activity Start Date and End Date:	October 15, 2014 to October 14, 2019
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	RTI International
[Contract/Agreement] Number:	AID-486-L-14-00001
Geographic Coverage (cities or countries):	Regional (Year 2 geographical focus: Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic [PDR])
Reporting Period:	Year 2: October 1, 2015–September 30, 2016

1.1 Program Description/Introduction

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Inform Asia: USAID's Health Research Program is being implemented by RTI International. The program consists of a Leader with Associates cooperative agreement that aims to support the work under Associate Awards 1 and 2.

As of the end of Quarter (Q) 3 of Year 2, USAID modified the scope of work for the Leader with Associates Award, and as a result, there are one intermediate result (IR) and one sub-IR, as follows:

- IR 1: Scientific research of health innovations/interventions, formative, and operational research conducted, and the findings disseminated

  - Sub-IR 1.1: Research agenda under Associate Awards 1 and 2 supported and implemented

The Leader with Associates Award provides the programmatic and operational backbone for the Inform Asia mechanism as a whole.

1.2 Summary of Results to Date

Prior to the re-scoping of Inform Asia in Q3, Inform Asia focused on re-orienting the program to align with its new technical direction. Following the approval of the revised program description on June 1, 2016, a revised work plan was submitted and is pending approval. Work under the Leader with Associates Award will complement and ensure that research activities under Associate Awards 1 and 2 are conducted soundly. Additionally, the acting Chief of Party (COP), program staff, and consultants have been working to provide technical and managerial oversight to all Award activities. Section 2 explains in greater detail the current status of activity implementation progress and achievements.

2. Activity Implementation Progress

2.1 Progress Narrative

In February 2016 (Q2), the program's main partner, the Thai Red Cross Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Research Centre (TRCARC), terminated its partnership with RTI. During this reporting period, RTI revised the program descriptions for the Leader with Associates Award and Associate Award 1. Activities under the Leader with Associates Award focused on maintaining operations and some individual activities that were approved on a case-by-case basis by the Agreement Officer's Representative.

In Q2, the program descriptions for the Leader with Associates Award and both Associate Awards 1 and 2 were revised following the re-scoping of the program. USAID approved all three program descriptions on June 1, 2016. During this reporting period, especially in Q3, activities under the Leader with Associates Award focused on re-orienting Inform Asia as a whole and ensuring that operations were maintained, in light of the program's new technical direction.

The section below provides a narrative overview of the activities that were initiated or completed in Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) during this reporting period. The activity implementation status of the activities is discussed in Section 2.3.

2.2 Program Achievements

Re-orientating Inform Asia: New technical direction. Following the significant changes in the Inform Asia program as a whole and the Leader with Associates Award in particular, dramatic changes were made in both the scope and direction. One IR and one sub-IR result remain, as follows:

- IR 1: Scientific research of health innovations/interventions, formative, and operational research conducted, and the findings disseminated

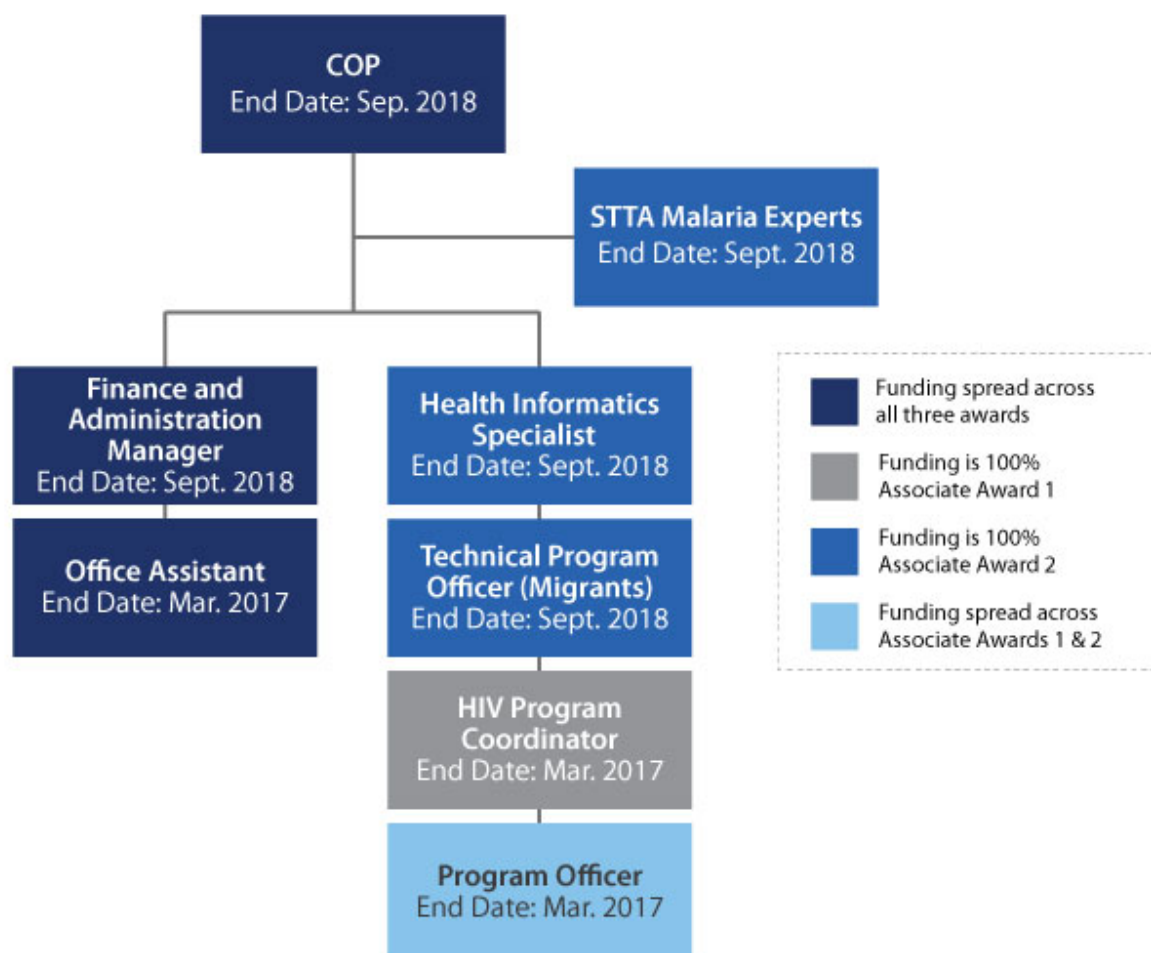Activities under this IR support activities under Associate Awards 1 and 2.

- Sub-IR 1.1: Research agenda under Associate Awards 1 and 2 supported and implemented

Activities under IR 1 are now focused primarily on supporting remaining research activities under Associate Award 1 and ensuring that Associate Award 2 activities are well established and positioned to move forward. Work under the Leader with Associates Award has concentrated on technical assistance and stakeholder relationship maintenance. In April 2016, the original COP resigned and left RTI. With approval from USAID, RTI appointed an interim COP, Dr. Leopoldo Villegas, to lead the program on a temporary basis to enable RTI to recruit a new a COP and especially to provide technical assistance, management, and oversight to Associate Award 2. He was assigned to Inform Asia during late May 2016–August 30, 2016. From September 1 onward, Ms. Felicity Young, Project Manager, has been acting COP and will continue to provide management oversight until the new COP, Dr. Darin Kongkasuriyachai, commences on December 1, 2016.

In the interim, until Dr. Kongkasuriyacha begins work, the acting COPs have held and continue to hold regular meetings or phone calls with stakeholders, partners, and consultants to review the progress to date and address challenges and issues that arise during research implementation. Under the Leader with Associates Award, the staff have been providing technical and managerial oversight for Associate Award 1 and 2 activities.

Exhibit 1 shows the current organogram. A robust team of local consultants contracted under both Associate Awards are providing valuable on-the-ground technical assistance to the program and stakeholders. Additionally, RTI's home office support staff continue to provide close technical and administrative assistance to the program.

Exhibit 1. Inform Asia Revised Organogram

2.3   Implementation Status

Exhibit 2 lists all the activities proposed in the Year 2 work plan and their progress to date.

Exhibit 2. Gantt Chart of Activity Status by the End of Year 2

Activities	Lead	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Status
		O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	
Operations														
Interim COP recruited and in-country	RTI								X	X	X				Completed. Felicity Young is acting COP until the new COP commences work on December 1, 2016.

Activities	Lead	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Status
		O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	
New COP recruitment: Revised job description developed and advertised	RTI							X	X	X				A new COP candidate has been submitted to USAID and approved.
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) program manager recruited (funded 100% under Associate Award 1)	RTI								X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing. This position has been allocated to the previous Communications Manager and will remain so until the end of Associate Award 1 in March 2017.
IR 1: Scientific research of health innovations/interventions, formative, and operational research conducted, and the findings disseminated														
Sub-IR 1.1: Research agenda under Associate Awards 1 and 2 supported and implemented														
Routine operations include financial, administrative, and logistical support; procurement; human resources; and programmatic, financial, and technical reporting	RTI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing, monthly

2.4 Implementation Challenges

Revision of program descriptions and annual work plans. Throughout Q3, RTI, with support from USAID, focused on revising the three program descriptions, budgets, and work plans to better suit the new direction of Inform Asia as a whole. However, USAID granted approval on a case-by-case basis to enable activities under all three awards to proceed. As a result, many of the activities that had previously been delayed under Associate Awards 1 and 2 were fast tracked to implementation. Progress is discussed in the individual awards' quarterly reports.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Update

Following USAID's approval of the revised program descriptions on June 1, 2016, a revised work plan was approved on July 8, 2016. The indicators that were originally proposed for the Leader with Associates Award are no longer applicable because of the change in program direction and, in particular, because RTI is no longer partnering with the TRCARC. Therefore, as recommended by USAID, the indicators in this report are based on the revised M&E.

Exhibit 3 lists the indicators proposed in the revised M&E plan that was re-submitted to USAID on August 30, 2016. Most of the indicators in the original Year 1 work plan are no longer relevant because of the revised program description.

Exhibit 3. Leader with Associates Program Indicators as Proposed in the Revised M&E Plan

Indicator	Description and Unit of Measurement	Data Source	Reporting Frequency	Baseline	Target	Progress
IR 1: Scientific research of health innovations/interventions, formative and operational research conducted, and the findings disseminated						
1. Number of information products targeting researchers, program managers, and decision- and policymakers developed and disseminated	*Use:* To track the information products supported by the activity *Description:* Tracks the total number of research activities implemented with United States Government (USG)-funded support. These are disaggregated by type (e.g., technical guides, reports, policy and other briefs, research papers, peer-reviewed or non-peer-reviewed articles, best practices, success stories, program lessons learned, conference abstracts, posters or presentations, and other forms of media). *Unit:* Absolute number	Administrative records: Expenditure for document production, conference participation, and sub-agreement monitoring	Quarterly	0	2	The two Associate Awards will generate these products. Note that Associate Award 1 ends in March 2017 and that Associate Award 2 ends in September 2018. Therefore, unless more Associate Awards are received, Years 4 and 5 will have no funding.
Sub-IR 1.1: Research agenda under Associate Awards 1 and 2 supported and implemented						
2. Number of activities supported with USG funds	*Use:* To track each activity that receives technical assistance support funded through USG funds from the Lead with Associates Award. *Description:* Tracks the total number of activities implemented with technical assistance support. Technical assistance includes, but is not limited to, input into the design of tools, protocols, analysis, or written reports of	Lead with Associates Award program records	Quarterly	0	9 (Note: Three activities under Associate Award 1 and six activities under Associate Award 2)	Targets are based on the annual work plan and the availability of funding for technical assistance support.

Indicator	Description and Unit of Measurement	Data Source	Reporting Frequency	Baseline	Target	Progress
	distinct research activities implemented. This indicator is disaggregated by the sector focus of the research activity (e.g., HIV and malaria). *Unit:* Absolute number					

3. Management and Administrative Issues

As discussed, a new COP has been recruited and approved by USAID. Her anticipated start date is December 1, 2016. Interim coverage support is being provide by Ms. Felicity Young.

4. Planned Activities for the Next Quarter, Including Upcoming Events

No major events are foreseen for the Leader with Associates Award in Q1 besides the onboarding of the new COP in December.

Proposed international travel is outlined in **Exhibit 4.**

Exhibit 4. Proposed International Travel

Supported by	Traveler	Link to Activities and Description	Origin	Destination	Trips/Days
Cost shared between the Leader with Associates Award and Associate Award 1.	Dr. Darin Kongkasuriyachai, COP	COP training at RTI headquarters—Research Triangle Park, NC, and Washington, DC	Bangkok, Thailand	Raleigh, North Carolina, and Washington, DC	One trip, 12 days January 2017